

# Abersychan Urban District Council.

## MEDICAL OFFICER'S REPORT, 1896.

Abersychan.

February 8th, 1897.

Gentlemen,—In accordance with the requirements of the Local Government Board, I beg to lay before you a *resumé* of the health of your district for the year 1896.

You will perceive from the statistical tables which accompany this report that the mortality from all causes was 223:—Under 1 year, 77; 1 and under 5 years, 31; 5 and under 15 years, 6; 15 and under 25 years, 8; 25 and under 65 years, 61; 65 years and upwards, 40. Mortality from subjoined causes:—Diphtheria, 1; membranous croup, 3; typhoid 1; continued fever, 1; puerperal fever, 1; whooping cough, 7; diarrhoea and dysentery, 5; phthisis, 9; bronchitis, pneumonia, and pleurisy, 47; heart disease, 15; injuries, 7; all other diseases, 126; total, 223.

### POPULATION, BIRTHS, AND NEW CASES OF INFECTIOUS DISEASE.

Population at all ages, census 1891, 15,296; estimated to middle of 1896, 16,000. Registered births, 626. New cases of sickness in each locality coming to the knowledge of the medical officer of health:—Smallpox, 1; scarlet fever, 84; diphtheria, 4; typhoid, 3; measles, 4.

*Population.*—I estimate the population to be 16,000. Last year, in consequence of the stoppage of the Pontnewynydd works, I guessed the population to be the same as the previous year, viz., 15,683. On the resumption of work at Pontnewynydd, several families returned to the district. The difference between the births and the deaths is 403; the deaths under 1 year being 77. I think I cannot be far out in estimating the population at 16,000; but all this is based on the assumption that the influx in 1896 is equal to the exodus in 1895.

*Rates.*—The birth rate was 39.1, the death rate was 13.9, the zymotic rate 0.68, the phthisis rate was 0.56.

*Deaths (per 1,000 Births) under 1 Year, 123.*

You will see from the following table the deaths at the different ages, as compared with former years:—

1896	1895	1894	1893	1892	
77	76	85	83	83	Under 1 year
31	49	46	35	71	Under 5 years
6	11	7	18	18	" 15 "
8	8	14	21	7	" 25 "
61	68	53	82	83	" 65 "
40	52	30	49	46	65 and upwards

The entire death rate for the year under review is very low, 13.9, and, I believe, establishes a record for this district. The infantile mortality is higher than last year, and constitutes the chief blot, and if the 77 deaths under 1 year be added to the 31 under 5, making 108, and approaching to half the entire deaths, causes one to modify one's expression of gratification at the low rate of mortality; but even here we can, I think, compare favourably with other districts in the county, or the whole of England. The infantile mortality, per 1,000 births, in the whole of England and Wales was last year 161, and for the whole county of Monmouth 151.5.

*The Rainfall.*—The total rainfall for the year was 41.70 inches; the amount for 1895, 51.77 inches. September and December were characterised as being the wettest months, the quantities being 10.29 and 8.91 respectively; the driest were May (0.31 inches) and November (1.03). The highest rainfall for one day was registered on September 17th, the amount being 1.35 inches. Rain fell on 197 days in the year.

*Smallpox.*—We had one case of this disease, it occurred in a young man living in the South Ward on the 12th May, in a new row of houses with good sanitary surroundings. I could not at the time or subsequently trace the cause of the infection; there were at the time cases in a neighbouring district, and possibly he may have come in contact with a person suffering from the disease. Through the courtesy of the chairman and the medical officer of the Pontypool Urban District Council, I was enabled to have the patient removed at once to their tent isolation hospital, and arranged for his attendance and maintenance. The house was thoroughly disinfected, the bedding burnt, the inhabitants in the neighbourhood who would permit it were re-vaccinated by the public vaccinator, and every pre-

caution we could think of was taken to prevent spread, which was happily successful, as no other case occurred in the district. I may mention that your chairman gave your officers every assistance, and arranged that a piece of suitable ground be obtained and a hospital tent purchased, so that in the event of another case occurring, we should be in a position to act at once. The expense of this was considerable, and was willingly sanctioned by your Council at their next meeting.

*Typhoid.*—We had three cases of this disease and one death. The fatal case was notified 26th June, and died on July 7th, in the north ward; it arose from defective surroundings, which were remedied, and there was no spread. The next case occurred in the central ward in September, was imported, convalesced satisfactorily, and no spread. The third case appeared in the end of the same month in the south ward from leaky drain, which was put right; there was no spread. Comparing the year under review with the one previous, a considerable improvement is shown.

The case of continued fever occurred in May in the north ward; was not notified. No assignable cause could be ascertained on an examination of the premises after death; there was however no spreading; all due precautions were taken.

*Scarlet Fever.*—There were 84 cases of this disease, no deaths. There were 12 in February, 4 in March, 2 in April, 2 in May, 7 in July, 4 in August, 12 in September, 15 in October, 18 in November, and 8 in December, so that practically this disease was present with us during the entire year, and all parts of your district were affected. The wonder is that there were no more cases, and one can only attribute it to the vigilance of your officers and to the readiness of the head masters of the various schools in co-operating with them in not allowing entrance to scholars from infected houses.

*Measles.*—There were only four cases of measles of which I became cognisant. This disease is not notified, but in my opinion should be. According to a report issued from the central Authority to the various medical officers of health in the country, it is by far the most fatal of the zymotic diseases.

*Influenza.*—We have had this disease cropping up all the year. There were no fatal cases, and it never assumed the proportions of an epidemic.

*Whooping Cough.*—This disease was accountable for 7 deaths. It was epidemic in the spring months, but seemed to die away in the early summer, and at the end of the year I only knew of one case.

*Diphtheria.*—There were four cases of this disease, with one death, and three fatal cases of membranous croup. After inspection, damp was supposed to be the cause, and the defects remedied.

*Phthisis.*—There were 9 deaths from this disease. The rate is lower than last year, and compares favourably with the rate for the whole county last year, which was 0.80.

*Diarrhoea and Dysentery.*—There were 5 deaths from these diseases, four in infancy, comparing favourably with former years and pointing to a greater care in the feeding of children.

*Puerperal Fever.*—There was one death from this disease. This is also a step in the right direction.

*Rheumatic Fever.*—We have had no deaths under this head during the year, no doubt attributable to the small rainfall.

*Bronchitis, Pneumonia, and Pleurisy.*—There were 26 deaths from these diseases in children, and 21 over five years of age.

*Heart Disease.*—There were 15 deaths from this disease, as compared with 27 in the year 1895. I think I have now gone over the chief points arising out of the Mortality returns, and I would congratulate the Council upon the generally low rates prevailing, but we must remember that the season was an exceptional one, and not be too sanguine as to its continuance. Comparing the returns with those of even ten years ago, the improvement effected must be gratifying to the Council upon their expenditure.

The Food Supply has been uniformly good.

*Milk.*—The various dairies have been regularly visited. Three prosecutions were instituted against vendors, and in each fines were inflicted for dilution.

*Scavenging.*—The ashbins placed throughout the district have been a great improvement in the

appearance of the district, and have materially lessened the labours of the scavengers.

In company with your inspector, I have completed a house-to-house visitation of the entire district, and a regular report has been laid before you of the conditions found. As the outcome of that action 35 houses were reported as unfit for human habitation. 23 of these have since been furnished with new roofs, doors, floors, and windows, and put in a good sanitary condition, 3 have been improved and repairs of a minor character executed, and 3 have been closed by order of the justices. I cannot speak too highly of the assistance rendered to me by your inspector, and I am greatly indebted to him for the care he took and the time he spent over the detailed account of our house-to-house visitation. I am also indebted to him for the following account of sanitary work done during the year.

List of sanitary work, year ending 1896:—

Foul water closets and privies cleansed .....	58
Untrapped w.c.'s furnished with pans & traps .....	55
Choked drains opened and cleansed .....	45
Houses provided with water supply .....	26
Offensive accumulations removed .....	25
Troughing and downpipes provided to abate nuisances arising from dwellings .....	23
Closets built .....	20
Slop and surface water drains provided to undrained premises .....	18
Untrapped slop drains furnished with stone-ware gully traps .....	16
Defective and leaky stone drains taken up and sanitary pipes substituted .....	12
Privies converted into w.c.'s by draining into main sewer .....	3
Inmates of overcrowded cottages dispersed .....	9
Sanitary defects in internal w.c.'s corrected by providing proper flushing and ventilating appliances .....	2
Slop stones and bath wastes disconnected from the house drains and made to empty over external traps .....	6
Defective urinals repaired, lined with cement, properly floored, and drained .....	4
Urinal accommodation provided to serve licensed premises .....	4
490 yards of sanitary pipes laid .....	

Total number of sanitary improvements effected or nuisances abated .....

To enforce the same 253 statutory notices were served; 39 written intimations, and 5 prosecutions.

The slaughter-houses have been systematically inspected throughout the year, and the bye-laws with reference to cleansing and whitewashing enforced.

The schools have also been visited and disinfected regularly. The drains at Garudiffaith have been taken up and re-laid, and defective latrines taken out and re-placed by some of a more modern construction—efficient ventilation has also been provided at the high points.

*Water Supply.*—The whole of the district is well supplied, with the exception of the Old Furnace, where great inconvenience is felt. The action taken by the Council in requiring the Water Company to undertake the supply has resulted in nothing being done, and the prospect of another dearth of water like last summer is not a cheering one for the inhabitants to contemplate.

*Sewage Disposal.*—Same as last year—ending in the river. It is to be hoped the action of the County Council in inviting a conference of the various authorities, and the institution of a committee, will result in some useful action for the abatement of an acknowledged nuisance and a danger to health.

*Recommendations.*—I would recommend the appointment of a sanitary committee for each ward, with whom your officers could consult in an emergency. I would also recommend the inspection of new houses, before occupation, by your inspector, as it is much easier to remedy defects (and they are legion, as discovered in our house-to-house visitation) before occupation than after. Also, the completion of the drainage scheme, the adoption of the Infectious Diseases Notification Act (to include measles), and the erection of an infectious diseases hospital.—Your obedient servant,

J. W. MULLIGAN, M.D.,  
Medical Officer of Health.

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